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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 22, 2006

In Today's Papers

CODEL Warner, General Pace Due in Ankara
Star, Zaman, TVs: On Thursday General Peter Pace, Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, will arrive in Ankara for talks at the Turkish General Staff (TGS) and the Prime Ministry. He will also participate in an international conference on global terrorism during his two-day visit. Star reports that General Pace will move on to Istanbul together with the Chief of the Turkish General Staff, General Hilmi Ozkok, on March 25. Meanwhile, several TV channels reported that a US Congressional delegation led by Senator John Warner, Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, will visit Ankara on Thursday to discuss regional issues, including Iraq and Iran, with Turkish military and political leaders.

AJC's Jacobs Visits Ankara
Milliyet, Radikal, Yeni Safak: American Jewish Committee (AJC) Strategic Research Director Barry Jacobs met with ruling AKP lawmakers Egemen Bagis and Saban Disli, and senior officials at the Turkish Foreign Ministry (MFA) on Monday in Ankara. Jacobs told the press that not only American Jews, but all groups across the political spectrum in the United States had increasing concerns over 'what Turkey has been trying to do.' 'Popular interest in anti-American and anti-Semitic works such as Metal Storm, Valley of the Wolves, and Mein Kampf makes us wonder what is happening in Turkey. Turkish leaders should speak out against such movies and books in the way we have reacted against anti-Turkish movies and series in the United States,' Jacobs said. Asked about the recent visit by Hamas leaders to Turkey, Jacobs said that Halid Mashal was no different than jailed PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan. 'Both Mashal and Ocalan were supported by Damascus. The Turks understood that the timing of the

visit was inappropriate, but they gave very important messages to Mashal,' Jacobs noted. Jacobs said that the Jewish lobby in the US would continue to back Turkey in the event of efforts by pro-Armenian groups to pass a 'genocide' resolution in the Congress.

"Cobra-II" Describes US-Turkey Negotiations Before Iraq War

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Vatan, Cumhuriyet, Radikal, Zaman, Yeni Safak and others:

A book by Michael Gordon and retired Marine General Bernard Trainor, "Cobra-II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq," claims that if the Turkish Parliament had not rejected the deployment of US troops into Iraq through Turkish territory in March 2003, Turkey would have been allowed to station 20,000 troops in northern Iraq to prevent PKK infiltration and the flow of refugees into Turkey. The Turks may also have been deployed to the oil-rich province of Kirkuk. The book claims that Turkey asked the US for 25 billion USD in assistance as an incentive to join the US-led coalition in Iraq.

Turkish columnists continue to express their view on the situation in Iraq on the anniversary of the US-led war. Kamuran Ozbir wrote in the nationalist Ortadogu that it will be difficult for Iraq's neighbors other than Turkey to help establish political stability in the war-torn country: "While the Shiites would like Iran to help, the Sunnis reject this. Jordan's offer for assistance was rejected by the Shiites. Regional and international developments do not allow Syria to help. Therefore,

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Turkey is the only country that can help Iraq to establish political stability. But first Turkey needs to find a way to bridge the differences between Iraqi Shiites and Sunnis."

In the mainstream Milliyet, Hasan Cemal notes that Turkey would have received 25 billion USD in US assistance if the parliament had not rejected the US proposal to open a northern front into Iraq. Cemal believes the 'bad' situation in Iraq today would not have been better if Saddam Hussein had stayed in power. Cemal wrote: "I traveled to Baghdad a month after Saddam was toppled, and the Shiites and Kurds were extremely happy about it. Of course the situation was very hard to accept for the Sunnis, who had ruled the country for 80 years. As the bloodshed in Iraq continues, we can see that the ethnic and sectarian hostility among the Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds as well as the mistakes of the Bush Administration have played the biggest part in this."

Ambiguity Over Central Bank Governor Appointment

All Papers: President Sezer's Office announced that the President has not received a decree from the government proposing the appointment of Erdem Basci as the new governor of the Central Bank (CB). Prime Minister Erdogan said the government had submitted to Sezer a decree with a nomination of a new CB governor, but did not reveal the name of the nominee. The PM urged everyone to wait for the President to announce the name. Papers speculate that Adnan Buyukdeniz, former director of the Islamic financial institution al-Baraka Turk, had the best chance to be given the post. Papers also report that capital markets are in turmoil over the uncertainty over the Central Bank leadership. Meanwhile Omer Sabanci, Chairman Turkey's influential business group TUSIAD, criticized the AKP government for its handling of the nomination, adding that the government would have been better off extending the mandate of former CB Governor Sureyya Serdengeci.

TV Highlights

NTV, 8 AM

Domestic News

- Prime Minister Erdogan told an Austrian magazine that the Greek Cypriots will not be allowed into Turkish ports and airports unless and until the international isolation of Turkish Cyprus ends.

- Afghan President Karzai and US Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff General Pace are expected to participate in a symposium on international terrorism sponsored by the Turkish General Staff on Thursday in Ankara.

- Some 100,000 people celebrated the Nevruz festival in Diyarbakir in a largely peaceful demonstration. Police took tight security measures and Turkish jetfighters flew over the crowd at a low altitude. Weekend celebrations in Istanbul and Ankara had been held peacefully, despite minor disturbances. Intelligence sources fear that PKK militants may provoke people to take action against security forces during ongoing Nevruz celebrations in several Turkish cities.

- Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul will remain in hospital until the end of this week following ear surgery.

- Turkey's TV and radio watchdog RTUK said that

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broadcasts in Kurdish will begin on private TV and radio stations in Diyarbakir and Sanliurfa on Thursday.

International News

- Naji Sabri, former foreign minister under Saddam Hussein, is alleged to have been a CIA operative, and provided valuable details of Iraq's WMD program to the United States. Sabri received 100,000 USD from the CIA.

- The Turkish Cypriots have established a special commission to deal with property in northern Cyprus by Greek Cypriots.

- An Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) delegation paid a support visit to Turkish Cyprus to discuss possible cooperation.

- Swedish Foreign Minister Laila Freivalds resigned in a row over the closing down of a Swedish website that was to publish the cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad.

Economy News

- A public offering will be held for the sale of a 25 percent stake in Turkish Airlines.

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<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

WILSON